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What Shakespeare Knew About Life Assurance

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By

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THE INTRODUCTION

Effulgent orb of intellectual light, whose
"Sacred radiance" doth hold its "royal court"
In all the thought "spangled starlight sheen" of mental
space,
And by whose "bright radiance and collateral light"
All lesser stars do shine—Great Shakespeare,
To Thee, we sing our "endless praise!"
All whose emotions are swayed by the grander factors
Of human existence look to Thee for thought crystals
Of speech. Expression were "void and empty"
Without Thee, and human communication "dull of
Tongue, and dwarfish."
Vacuous was the mental world, and slow
The progress of man, till Thy immortal analysis
Of "his mental and his active parts" did show
"In Nature's infinite book"
"A combination and a form, indeed,
Where every God did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man;"
And from the countless survivals of all the unrecorded
past
Had Evolution created men of "thine age,"

O, Immortal Bard, but a thousandth part like Thee,
The protective genius of "modest Assurance" would,
"These three hundred years" agone, have been nurtured
Into life and being by Thy appeals to Right,
To "Love, Charity, Obedience and True Duty."

THE MORTALITY TABLE

Not in actuarial figures, "heavy, dull and slow,"
That tell of deaths by number and the "brief span"
Of "feverous life" allotted to mankind, O, Shakespeare,
Was Thy Mortality Table inscribed, for Thou hast
Made Macbeth, "with bated breath," to say:

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more."

In never ending beats the pendulum of Eternity
Doth swing.
With every measured second the beating of an aching
Heart doth cease; the strings of emotion in some
"Wretched soul bruised with adversity" are rent in twain;
And some mind, "weary and old with service,"
Lays down its sceptre of thought upon Mentality's
Vacant throne.

Every passing minute its seven and sixty deaths
Doth count; each dying day within its fold doth gather
The "tide of tears" and grief for seven
And ninety thousand who wake no more;

And with each New Year's bell that measures
The "glad and sorry seasons" and tolls for the
Added drop from Time's shoreless ocean to
Eternity's waste of waters, five and thirty millions in
"Tender youth" and "homely age," the prattling child,
The boy and maid, and men in prime and second
Childhood,—all who make up great Shakespeare's Seven
Ages—pass along the darkened road to the
Silent tomb of the eternal Past, for

"All that lives must die,
Passing through Nature to Eternity."

THE APPEAL OF ASSURANCE

To the living millions, the happy to-morrows
Ever remain. From these Assurance appeals, for
A daily mite in liquidation of debts unpaid
And duties unfulfilled, for that poor player, who,
All too soon, has fretted his brief hour
Upon the active stage of life and time,
In the "wide and universal theatre" of this
"Brave world."

From out the long and fading vista of the Past,
"Renowned Rome" that from her seven hills waved
The "high sceptre" of "absolute power" o'er all
"The infected world," rises as a dreamlike
Vision of might and "royal majesty" before me.

The "wild waves" of passion, tumult and rage
Are playing upon the Roman mind as billows
Upon the sea. The multitude but deign
To hear Antony's tribute to him he feared,
Honored and loved. Upon unwilling ears and
"The empty, vast and wandering air," whose every
"Contagious breath" is warlike with rebellious patriotism,

These "fainting words" of heart-broken grief that
"Whispers the o'erfraught heart," are falling:

"O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?
* * * * * * * * *
But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; and now lies he
there,
And none so poor to do him reverence."

We, who plead the cause of Assurance and Protection,
And by our life work create the competencies of
Our "sad-hearted men, much overgone with care,"
Are the Mark Antonys of the present.

The ninety and seven of every hundred toiling men
Whose life endeavors for estate and "glorious fame"
Have shrunk to naught, from neglect of
"The way which promises Assurance," are
The modern Caesars whom Failure and "cruel Fate"
Do conspire to assassinate.

The venturesome marts of trade; the busy localities
Of loom and shuttle; the mighty mechanisms
That toy with metals and shape great
Nature's crude woods to forms of beauty;
"The choice and master spirits of this age,"
Who, with
"The singing masons building roofs of gold,"
Plan the towering domes of buildings massive, and
The bridges' slender spans that o'erleap the rivers
In their curves of beauty; the inventor's penetrating
Mind, that of great
"Jove's lightnings, the precursors
O' the dreadful thunder claps,"
A plaything makes; and all Life's
Bustling avenues of industry and courage creative,

Form "the very mould and frame" of our modern Rome,
That from Prosperity's uncountable "reverberate hills"
of civilization,
Doth wave her sceptre of Progress o'er all
The enlightened world.

How like Imperial Caesar doth many a "royal
merchant" die!
In life, the creator of "mighty enterprises"
That girt the world in their hopeful arms; whose
"Royal, good and gallant" ships, the white-winged
shuttles in
The earth-embracing loom of commerce, oscillate from
Continent to continent; whose "honour'd name" has
"grown so great"
As to couple with mighty deeds financial;
Who is
"The foremost man of all this world"
In life; in "the cruel pangs of death,"
But a "bleeding piece of earth." How many
Vast estates like unto his have dwindled away
'Neath Debt's importunate call, the hungry creditor, and
"The law's delay!" How many vast enterprises sustained
By the "natural magic" of his confidence-inspiring
Name, have left but a heritage of loss and
Failure, when the founder, like Mighty Caesar,
Lies low in that forum of waning greatness
That he alone could inspire and create!
Unlike in nations old and staid, in all
Columbia's wide domain bright-eyed Hope and
Sturdy Enterprise go, hand in hand, toward the
Goal of accomplishment that waits upon the undertaking.
Failure's grave contingencies doth hedge us 'round about,
As "the hollow crown that rounds the mortal temples
Of a king;" and yet, we hopeful say:
"If money go before, all ways do open lie."

To Columbia's hopeful sons doth Assurance offer
"A liberal dower" without defrayment, and at usance
So low that Usury's voice is hushed and still.
To us of this

"Brave new world,
That has such people in't,"

She bequeaths her fostering shield 'gainst chance
And loss, as a rich legacy from the
Prosperous Past to assure the Contingent Future; to
Save, perpetuate and place beyond Death's destroying
touch,
All the "conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils," of Hope
And Energy's creations, that Wealth, Honor and Success
Wait upon to call their own.

When to those, this shield refusing, the "poor,
mortal
Living ghost" of Life's failure appears, with loss of
"Bountiful fortune," and "Necessity's sharp pinch,"

"To view with hollow eye, and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty,"

How oft a breaking heart, the health's impairment,
And the wane of mental powers, associate!

The producing years of life are past. The shadows
Longer grow upon the declining hill of age;
The life work lies a wreck at Memory's portal;
And within Mind's crumbling temple Disappointment sits
In her ashen robes to warn all brighter
Thoughts away. Prostrate the mental ruin lies, and
All that shared its shelter have perished in
Its fall. The assuring Endowment and the Annuity
That provides will never mature.

"All is but toys; renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of."

THE DEATH OF THE UNINSURED

A picture in the sombre tints of
"The gloomy shade of death,"
And
"As full of sorrows as the sea of sands,"
On Memory's canvas now is thrown.
O'er all the dull hue of sadness blends
And all that is, is seen thro' tears.
'Tis the last hour of him who hath refused
The pleadings that "the more better Assurance" makes.
Another of Life's bankrupts, now, is struggling
With "grim and comfortless despair," and crowding thoughts
Of duties, deferred to unfulfillment, appall his sense of right.
The final debt to home and offspring due,
Is beyond the pale of payment now.
On the easel of the Future,
With
"Doubtful thoughts, and rash embracing despair
And shuddering fear,"

The dying flame of conscience glows,
And with expiring gleam doth show
The fear and care-burdened face of her,
Of whom a thousand times and o'er,
The dying man hath said:

"She is mine own;
And I as rich in having such a jewel,
As twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl,
The waters nectar, and the rocks pure gold."

Within the portals of his dying thought
But one truth doth have its being now,
And every cell of brain doth feel:

"The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

All is silence now, save beating hearts
Of grief and woe. A daughter's maiden face
Doth show the aging cares that e'en a
Woman should not know; from youthful eyes
Hope's brightest dreams have fled, and upon
Its chosen soil hath beauty ceased to bud.

A son,

"In the very may-morn of his youth,
Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises,"
From labyrinth paths of progressive thought
Must now retrace his springing steps,
And backward move to realms of mediocrity,
And the ghosts of misspent days that crowd
From the graves of what might have been.

Another mind is lost to the needs of
This great world, and Progress waits again
Her chosen one.

Our bankrupt "dies and makes no sign,"
E'en to her whose greatest debtor he has been.

"She looks upon his lips, and they are pale;
She takes him by the hand, and that is cold;
She whispers in his ears a heavy tale,
As if they heard the woeful words she told;
She lifts the coffer lids that close his eyes,
Where, lo, two lamps, burnt out, in darkness lies."

THE EPITAPH OF THE UNINSURED

The epitaph of one in whose nature
Assurance found no chord responsive,
We here indite,

"For all his dependants
Which labour'd after him:"

Noble he was in many things,
"A sweet-faced man, a proper man,
As one shall see in a summer's day;"
But in all that makes life wholly sweet
And certain of accomplishment for dependent ones,
Thoughtless he was and careless, as if
In self absorbed and lost.
"And dying so," his home he left without sustainment;
And those within its pictured walls who loved
Its beauties and were happy there, and felt
No fear of want, as day by day thro' many years
They added to its homelike wealth, knew it no longer,
Save in memory.
His wealth was coupled with an energy,
And "guiding power" of financial masterhood,
That could conceive and create Fortune's great results
From minor things and Time's "potent circumstances;"
But, when the master mind obliterate was,
And in the dead brain creative ambition
Had ceased to "sway our great designs,"
And others sought to do as he had done,
'Twas found that all his life accomplishments
By Death must needs fade to traceless naught.
And thus it was, that more of sorrow than
Of joy lived with his memory, until his
Name no more was spoken.
The sorrows he bequeathed lived on,
With "killing care" and depressing toil;
And undevelopment and the ungratified
Were woven and meshed into all the lives
Of kith and kin who struggled after him,
As legacies from one who thoughtless died.
So fade the works of men;
Back to the earth again, all things decay.

Of him with "heart as far from fraud as
Heaven from earth," who is most perfect in expounding
The warp and woof that Assurance "more busy
Than the laboring spider, weaves" through all
The lives of men, I must with Duncan say:

"In his commendation I am fed;
It is a banquet to me,"

For he it is who saves the home, and
With actuarial exactitude creates the science that
Doth perpetuate the sustaining competencies of life.
He it is, who,
With Accumulation's magic might, unravels the tangled
Knots that hold estates in jeopardy, and protects
The widow from poverty and "the moody and
Dull melancholy" of despair.
He it is, who
Offers Fortune's "noble benefits" to all, in payments
Easy as the years run on, and with full
Quittance made when we are called upon to pass

"The melancholy flood
With that grim ferryman which poets write of
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night."

He it is, who,
With "reasons as plentiful as blackberries," doth induce
The compoundings of the unmissed savings of
Life's producing years, when
"True hope is swift, and flies with swallows' wings,"
Into competencies for weak, infirm and unproductive
"Old age, that ill layer up of beauty."
He it is, who,
When caution's voice is still, and the prosperous
Present dulls the keen edge of Adversity's evil days
For all the Future's ever-changing years,

Admonishes to give thought and heed to Catesby's words:
"'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord,
When men are unprepared and look not for it."
He it is, who,
By driving away the haunting ghost of Poverty that
Forever pleads in Saving's stinted whisper of fear,
Brings to Home's sacred precincts the marbles that teem
With lines of living loveliness, pictures that glow
In color and in beauty, and
"books,
From whence doth spring the true Promethean
fire."
He it is, who,
To the prosperous, as the "black, suspicious, threatening
cloud"
Of adversity rises in the bright skies of Venture,
Recalls Macbeth's stern caution:
"I'll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of fate;
That I may tell pale-hearted Fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder."
He it is, who,
By a modern science evolved from the limbeck
Of our better natures, creates, from the savings of
Life's brief years, an interest that is the partner
Of Forever.
He it is, who,
With "some sweet, oblivious antidote," removes the deep
Lines from the face of illness that "the
Heavy thought of Care" has graven there,
And by soft'ning the dread pillow of disease, adds
Life's legacy of to-morrows to our brief "bank and
Shoal of Time."
He it is, who
Provides an asset that cannot be stolen or lost
When e'en the "sure and firm-set earth" is swept away

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By Adversity's "envious floods," and "what's past
And what's to come is strew'd with husks
And formless ruin."
He it is, who,
With Education's smiling cheer, supplants the vile dress
Of mediocrity that is the "blur to youth"
With "the intertissued robe of gold and pearl"
Proclaiming the enlightened mind that finds
"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."
He it is, who,
In communion with Man's higher faculties, doth average
The fortunes of men, efface the footprints of crime
Upon Progression's pathway through the Nations, and
Hold the torch by whose "most radiant, exquisite and
unmatchable"
Light, Evolution "with slow but stately pace," creates
A nobler, grander and more perfect type of man.

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